

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Substance abuse refers to excessive alcohol consumption, including binge and heavy drinking, as well as the use of illicit drugs. Binge drinking refers to consuming a large amount of alcohol during a short period of time. Men who have five or more drinks* and women who have four or more drinks on one occasion are considered to be binge drinking. Most binge drinkers are not alcoholics or alcohol-dependent. Heavy drinking refers to consuming some alcohol every day on average. Men who have at least two drinks and women who have at least one drink per day on average are considered to be heavy drinkers.

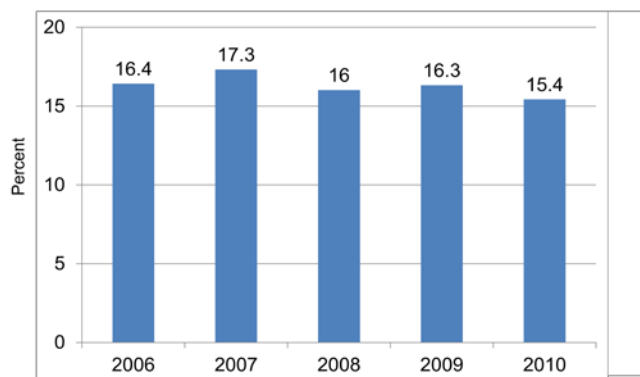
*One drink = 12 ounces beer, 5 ounces wine, 1.5 ounce liquor

Why is this important?

Substance abuse is a completely preventable health issue, affecting about one in 15 Americans. It affects not only the individual using drugs or alcohol, but also their family and community. It has been linked to a host of other problems including increased rates of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections/diseases, domestic violence and child abuse, car crashes, crime and homicide, and suicide.¹ In addition, youth who drink alcohol are more likely to have teenage pregnancies, have poor or failing grades in school, and be physically or sexually assaulted.² Programs and systems that help prevent or treat substance abuse protect the health, safety and quality of life for all Coloradans, especially our children.

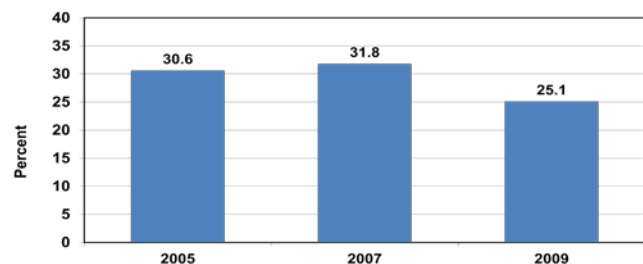
Where are we?

Percent of Colorado Adults who binge drink*, 2006-2010



*Binge drinking is defined as males having five or more drinks on one occasion, females having four or more drinks on one occasion in the past 30 days
Source: Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Binge drinking among Colorado students grades 9-12, 2005, 2007 and 2009



* Five or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours, on one or more of the past 30 days
Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Where do we want to be?

By 2016,

- decrease from 15.4 percent to 12 percent the percentage of adults who report binge drinking in the past 30 days;
- decrease from 25.1 percent to 20 percent the percentage of 9th graders to 12th graders who report binge drinking in the past 30 days.

★ Colorado's 10 Winnable Battles ★

Clean Air Clean Water Infectious Disease Prevention Injury Prevention
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Obesity Oral Health Safe Food Tobacco Unintended Pregnancy

What is being done?

Colorado is one of 10 states with a Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment program, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Through the program, health educators conduct substance use screenings at 12 clinics and hospitals located in 10 Colorado counties: Arapahoe, Denver, Eagle, El Paso, Gunnison, Larimer, Mesa, Prowers, Summit and Weld counties.

The screening and brief intervention informs people about health consequences related to substance use and reinforces responsible health behaviors. This approach is proven to be successful in changing behavior to improve health and quality of life. In addition to providing client screenings, the program has worked with HealthTeamWorks to develop and increase use of standardized substance abuse screening guidelines in health care settings across Colorado.³

High-risk groups

In Colorado, substance abuse is higher among certain groups than others.

- Gender: Men are more likely to binge drink than women.
- Age: Binge drinking is more common among younger groups and decreases as people get older.
- Race and ethnicity: Hispanics and whites are more likely to binge drink than blacks.
- Income: Those with higher incomes are more likely to binge drink than those with lower incomes.

Underlying causes

Where we live, learn, work and play are important in preventing and treating substance abuse. For example, there are more liquor stores in African-American communities as compared to white communities.⁴ Decreases in underage drinking are achievable only through community-based efforts to monitor youth activities and decrease youth access to alcohol.² For both youth and adults, social and economic policies affect access to substance abuse resources, community support, Medicaid and public health programs.⁵

- (1) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. *Healthy People 2010 midcourse review: Focus area 26, substance abuse* [Internet]. Washington: HHS; 2006 [cited 2010 April 12]. Available from: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2010/Data/midcourse/pdf/FA26.pdf>
- (2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Underage Drinking Fact Sheet*. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>
- (3) Colorado Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment program website: <http://www.improvinghealthcolorado.org/>
- (4) LaVeist, Thomas A. and Wallace Jr., John M. "Health risk and inequitable distribution of liquor stores in African American neighborhood", *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 51, Issue 4, 15 August 2000, Pages 613-617. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953600000046>
- (5) Galea, Sandro, M.D., Ph.D., and David Vlahov, Ph.D. "Social Determinants and the Health of Drug Users: Socioeconomic Status, Homelessness, and Incarceration" *Public Health Reports*. Volume 117, Supplement 1, 2002, Pages 135-145. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1913691/pdf/pubhealthrep00207-0140.pdf>

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